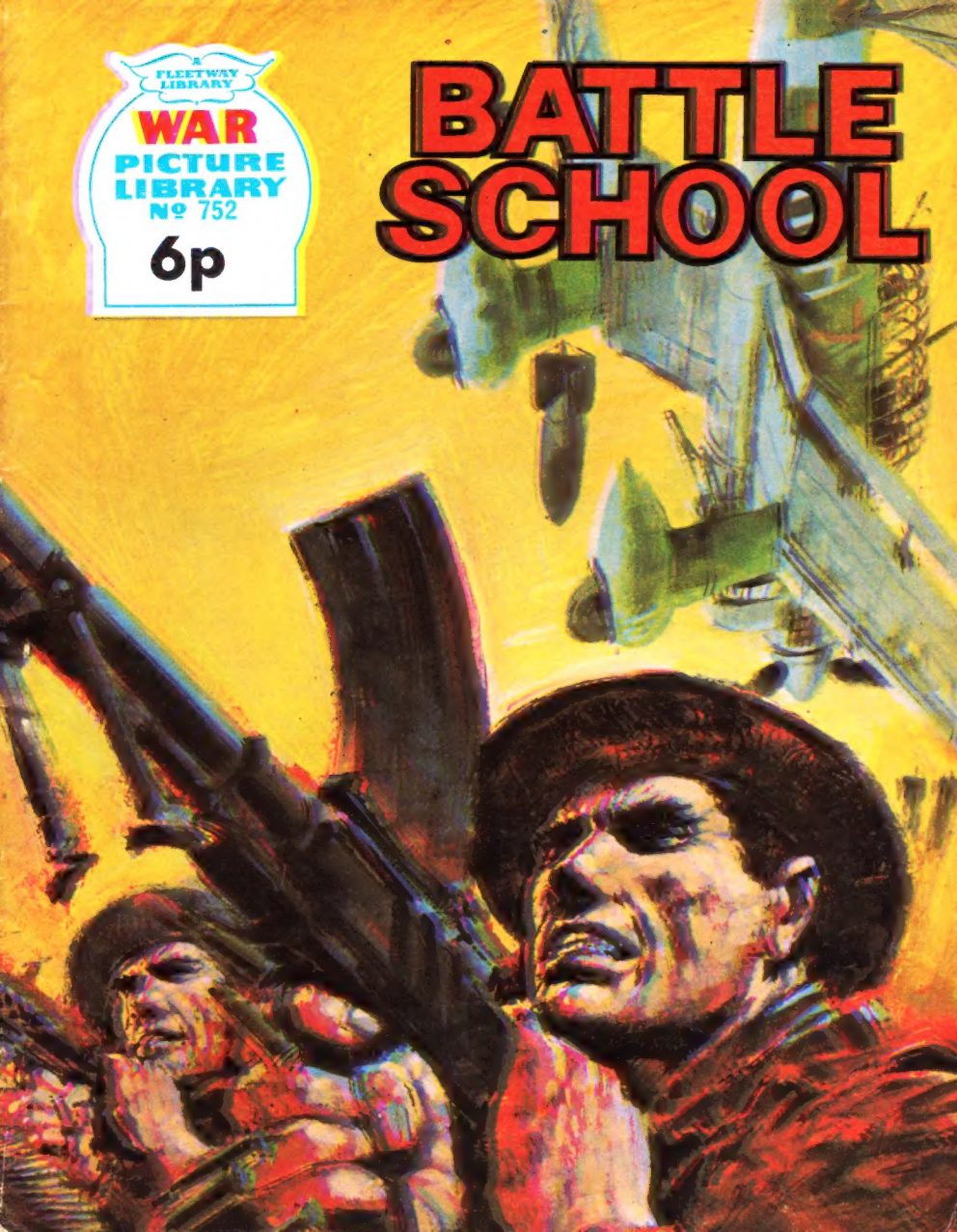


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# BATTLE SCHOOL



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# WAR

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# BATTLE SCHOOL



WHEN WAR WAS DECLARED IN 1939 MANY OF BRITAIN'S FIGHTING TROOPS WERE LITTLE MORE THAN CIVILIANS IN UNIFORM. FEW OF THEM VISUALISED THE FIERCE, MERCILESS BATTLES THAT LAY AHEAD - BATTLES WHICH WERE, IN FACT, TO TRANSFORM THEM INTO SOLDIERS AS FORMIDABLE AS ANY THAT NAZI GERMANY, FOR ALL ITS MILITARY MIGHT, COULD HURL AGAINST THEM.

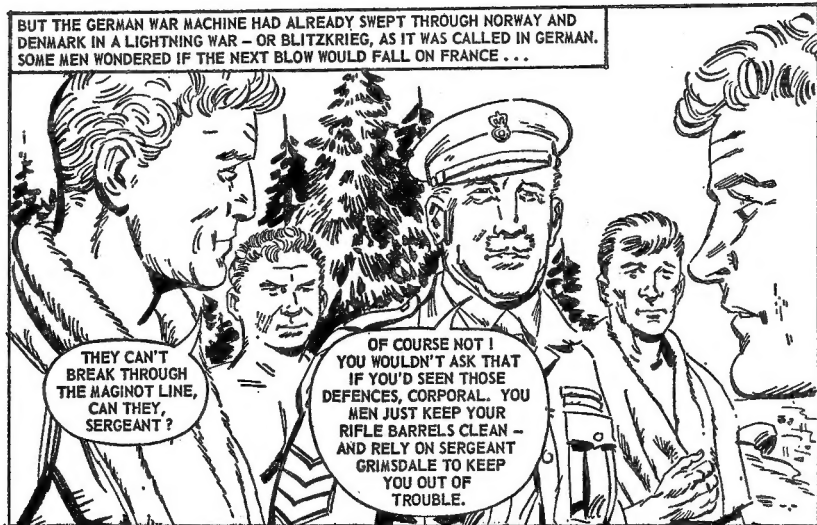
## Chapter 1.

**CITIZEN ARMY**

IN THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF THE WAR, THE BRITISH TROOPS WHO HAD CROSSED TO FRANCE FOUND IT ALL RATHER PLEASANT - ALMOST LIKE A CONTINENTAL HOLIDAY. DEATH AND DESTRUCTION SCARCELY ENTERED THEIR THOUGHTS.



BUT THE GERMAN WAR MACHINE HAD ALREADY SWEEPED THROUGH NORWAY AND DENMARK IN A LIGHTNING WAR - OR BLITZKRIEG, AS IT WAS CALLED IN GERMAN. SOME MEN WONDERED IF THE NEXT BLOW WOULD FALL ON FRANCE...



SERGEANT GRIMSDALE WAS ONE OF THE FEW PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS IN THE UNIT, MOST OF THEM WERE TERRITORIALS - CIVILIANS WHO HAD DONE A FEW WEEKS' TRAINING EACH YEAR ...

SERGEANT GRIMSDALE HAS SEEN A LOT OF ACTION, HASN'T HE, CORPORAL ?

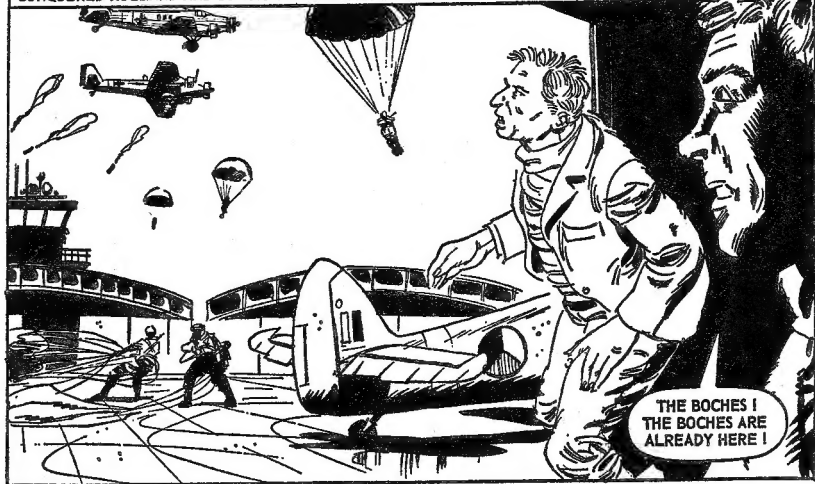
YES - BUT I DON'T THINK THIS WAR IS GOING TO BE FOUGHT LIKE THE OTHER WARS WERE.

SOON, CORPORAL HEDGES'S FOREBODINGS WERE REALISED ...

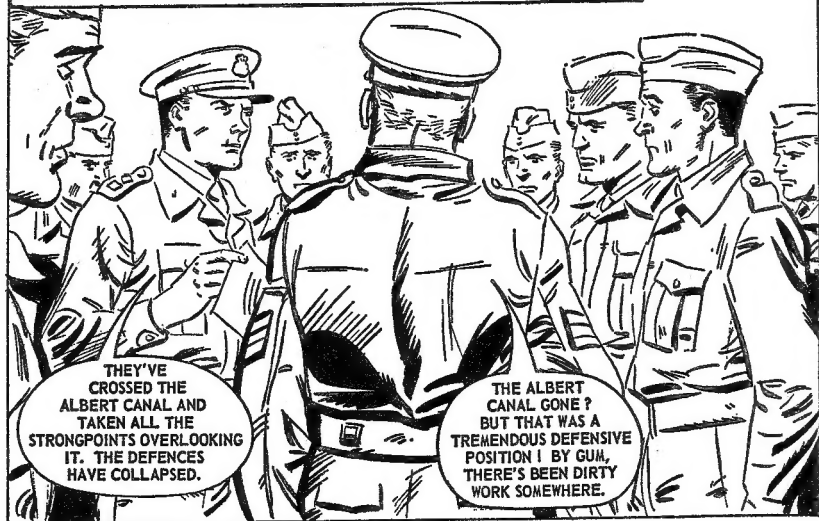
VORWAERT !  
FOR THE  
FUEHRER  
AND THE  
FATHERLAND !



FOLLOWING A PLAN WHICH HAD BEEN WORKED OUT TO THE LAST DETAIL, THE GERMAN FORCES CONQUERED HOLLAND AND BELGIUM WITH RUTHLESS EFFICIENCY.



REPORTS OF DISASTER AFTER DISASTER REACHED THE STUNNED BRITISH TROOPS ...

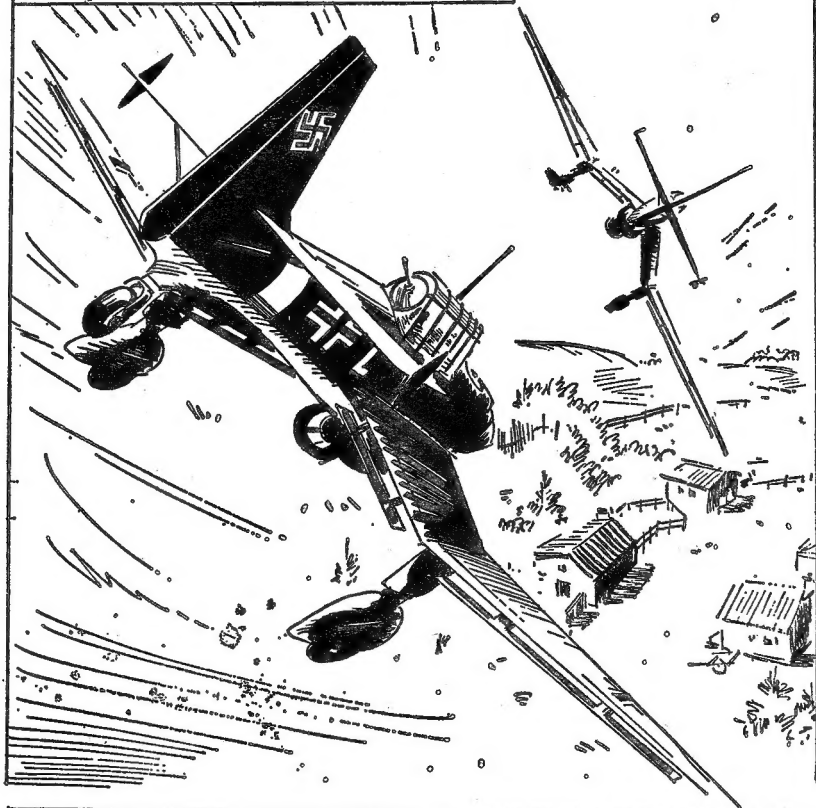




BUT THEY THEMSELVES STILL SEEMED FAR FROM THE WAR UNTIL ONE BRIGHT MAY DAY ...



THE ENGINE NOTES SUDDENLY CHANGED AS, WITH PARADE-GROUND PRECISION, THE PLANES WINGED OVER INTO THEIR DIVES . . .



TO THE MEN COVERING IN THEIR VARIOUS SHELTERS IT SEEMED THAT EACH PLANE WAS DIVING DIRECTLY AT THEM . . .



OH, HECK,  
CORP - LOOK !

GET YOUR HEAD  
DOWN, TANNER !



THE WHISTLE OF FALLING BOMBS, THE SCREAMING WAIL OF THE J-IMP engines, AND THE THUNDEROUS CRACK OF THE EXPLOSIONS, CREATED TOGETHER AN EAR-SPLITTING, TERRIFYING DIN ...

STRETCHER  
BEARERS!

AND THEN AT THE END THERE WERE A GREAT NUMBER OF EXPLOSIONS, BUT THEY WERE SHARPER AND LESS NOISY THAN THE OTHERS ...

INCENDIARIES!  
THEY'VE SET  
THE WHOLE PLACE  
ON FIRE!

THE PLANES FLEW AWAY AND THE MEN WHO WERE ALIVE CRAWLED FROM THEIR HIDING-PLACES. THE BUILDINGS WERE SHATTERED AND BURNING ...



THEY FOUGHT THE FIRES AS BEST THEY COULD, AND DRAGGED THEIR COMRADES FROM THE RUINS OF THE BUILDINGS IN WHICH THEY HAD SOUGHT SHELTER ...



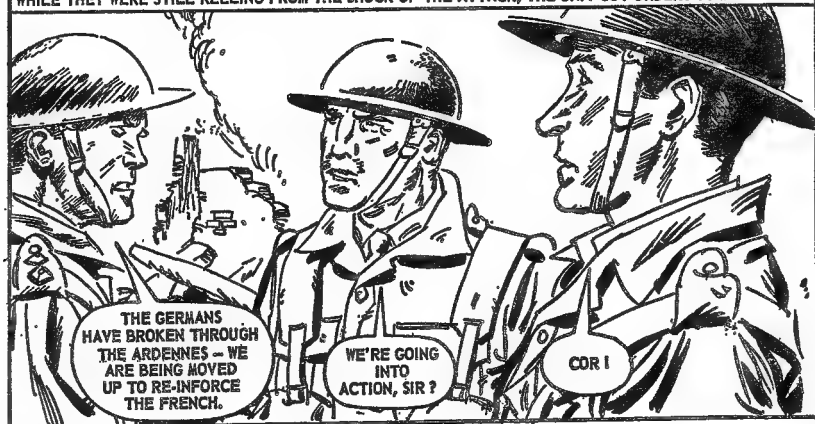
MUCH OF THEIR EQUIPMENT WAS WRECKED, AND MANY OF THE MEN WHO HAD SHELTERED IN THE FARM BUILDINGS WERE DEAD OR INJURED. THEY HAD RECEIVED A SHATTERING DEMONSTRATION OF GERMAN EFFICIENCY ...



## Chapter 2.

**FATAL ERRORS**

WHILE THEY WERE STILL REELING FROM THE SHOCK OF THE ATTACK, THE UNIT GOT ORDERS TO MOVE ...



THEY WAITED A LONG TIME FOR TRANSPORT, BUT THE LORRIES CAME AT LAST AND THEY RUMBLED OFF INTO THE NIGHT ...



THEY TRAVELLED FOR MOST OF THE NIGHT AND WHEN, AT LAST, THEY TUMBLED OUT INTO THE DARKNESS, THEY WERE STILL NOT ALLOWED TO REST . . .



THEY DOZED THROUGH MOST OF THE MORNING, NERVOUSLY WONDERING WHETHER AN ATTACK WAS COMING . . .





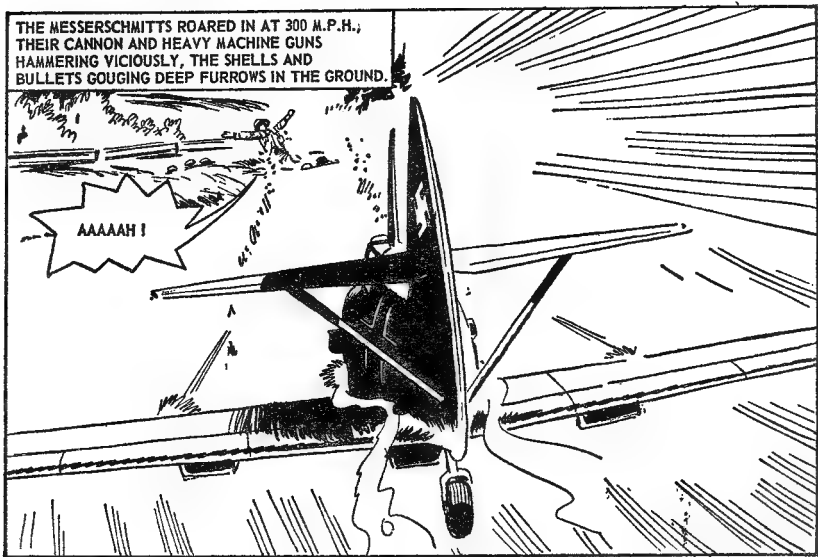
THEY HAD VISITORS TEN MINUTES LATER ...

ENEMY  
AIRCRAFT!  
TAKE COVER,  
MEN!



THE MESSERSCHMITTS ROARED IN AT 300 M.P.H.,  
THEIR CANNON AND HEAVY MACHINE GUNS  
HAMMERING VICIOUSLY, THE SHELLS AND  
BULLETS GOUGING DEEP FURROWS IN THE GROUND.

AAAAAH!





THE NOISE WAS FRIGHTFUL AND FOR CORPORAL HEDGES, WHAT WAS WORSE WAS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY COULD NOT HIT BACK ...



THE ATTACK WAS SOON OVER AND ONCE AGAIN THE ATTACKERS FLEW AWAY UNHARMED WHILE THE MEN ON THE GROUND COUNTED THEIR CASUALTIES ...



SERGEANT GRIMSDALE'S SHOUT WAS DROWNED BY THE BANG OF THE EXPLODING SHELL.



THEY PEERED OVER THE EDGES OF THEIR TRENCHES AND THE SHARP EYES OF MOSS SPOTTED SOMETHING THAT MADE SHIVERS OF FEAR RUN DOWN THEIR BACKS ...

TH-THERE !  
A - A GERMAN  
TANK ! THAT'S WHAT'S  
FIRING AT US !

TANKS ! GRIEF !  
HOW DID THEY  
GET HERE ?



THERE WAS A BREN AND A BOYES ANTI-TANK RIFLE IN THE SECTION. IT WAS LITTLE ENOUGH BUT AT LEAST THEY WERE NOT DEFENCELESS.

FIRE ON ALL TANKS  
AND OTHER TARGETS  
WITHIN RANGE !



THE TANK HAD STOPPED USING ITS BIG GUN NOW, AND HAD OPENED UP WITH ITS MACHINE GUN. A STREAM OF BULLETS HOWLED AND WHINED ABOVE THE INFANTRY ...

I THINK  
I HIT HIM.

YOU'LL BE  
LUCKY IF YOU  
STOP A PERISHING  
BIG TANK WITH THAT!  
WHERE ARE OUR  
ANTI-TANK GUNS?

AT THAT MOMENT, ONE OF THEIR TWO-POUNDERS FIRED FROM A POSITION OUT ON THE RIGHT. THE TANK HALTED AND THEN STARTED TO BACK AWAY ...

THAT'S  
THE STUFF! HE'S  
RETREATING! HE'S  
BEATEN HIM  
OFF!

THE TROOPS' EXULTATION AT THE RETREAT OF THEIR ENEMY WAS UNDERSTANDABLE - BUT THE LEVEL-HEADED ONES AMONG THEM KNEW THAT THEIR TRIUMPH COULD ONLY BE TEMPORARY ...

HE DIDN'T LIKE THAT, DID HE? DIDN'T LIKE A TASTE OF HIS OWN MEDICINE.

I RECKON HE JUST WASN'T TAKING NO CHANCES.

HE'LL BE BACK - AND HE WON'T BE ALONE NEXT TIME.

THERE CERTAINLY WERE OTHER GERMAN FORCES IN THE AREA, AS THEY QUICKLY DISCOVERED ...

WE MAY HAVE TO MOVE OUT THROUGH THOSE WOODS ON OUR RIGHT. WE BELIEVE SOME GERMANS ARE TRYING TO INFILTRATE THERE. SERGEANT GRIMSDALE IS TAKING A PATROL TO MAKE SURE OUR WAY IS CLEAR.

THERE WERE TEN OF THEM IN THE PATROL. THEY HAD DONE THE SAME THING MANY TIMES IN EXERCISES, BUT THE ENEMY WAS REAL THIS TIME - AND VERY DANGEROUS ...

WE'VE JUST PASSED OUR GUN POSITIONS. GET THE MEN TO SPREAD OUT SO THAT WE SWEEP A WIDE AREA, HEDGES.

RIGHT, SERGEANT.

PRIVATE MOSS WAS A COUNTRYMAN BORN AND BRED. HE WAS AT HOME IN THE WOODS - AND IT WAS HE WHO SPOTTED THE GERMANS...

THERE. THREE OF THEM AND THEY'VE GOT A MACHINE GUN.

HAVE THEY NOW?  
RIGHT - NOW YOU HAVE A LOOK 'ROUND BY YOURSELF AND SEE IF THERE ARE ANY OTHERS ABOUT.

MOSS WAS GONE A LONG TIME, BUT AT LENGTH HE RE-APPEARED...

THERE'S NO-ONE ELSE NEAR HERE, SERGEANT.

THEY WORKED THEIR WAY A LITTLE NEARER THEN TOOK COVER AS GRIMSDALE THREW A GRENADE...

OH HECK!  
IT HIT A BRANCH!

RIGHT. TELL THE MEN TO FIX BAYONETS, CORPORAL. THEY DON'T LIKE COLD STEEL - WE FOUND THAT OUT IN THE LAST WAR.

WAS IST DAS?



THE GRENADE DROPPED SHORT AND THE GERMANS ESCAPED THE FULL BLAST, BUT SERGEANT GRIMSDALE WAS NOT THE MAN TO DRAW BACK...



THE SERGEANT GOT TO WITHIN FIVE YARDS OF THE GUN BEFORE THE FIRST BLAST FROM IT CAUGHT HIM FULL IN THE CHEST...





THE MACHINE GUN SWUNG QUICKLY, SCYTHING DOWN THE RUNNING MEN WITH DEADLY EFFICIENCY . . .



THE BULLETS RIPPED OVER CORPORAL HEDGES' HEAD AS HE HUGGED THE EARTH. THE ATTACK HAD FAILED AND HE WAS TRAPPED . . .



BUT PRIVATE MOSS, OUT ON ONE FLANK, HAD STEALTHILY WORKED HIMSELF ROUND TO A POSITION AT THE SIDE OF THE GERMANS . . .



HEDGES HEARD THE DISTINCTIVE CRACK OF RIFLE SHOTS AND RISKED LIFTING HIS HEAD ...

ONE OF OUR CHAPS IS FIRING FROM THE SIDE - NOW I CAN DO SOMETHING!



HEDGES FIRED ONCE AND THEN CHARGED. AS HE RACED FORWARD, YELLING AND SHOUTING, HE FOUND PRIVATE TANNER RUNNING WITH HIM - BUT THAT WAS ALL ...

CH-A-A-R-G-E!  
YAAAA!

HAAA! YAAA!

NEIN!



THERE WERE ONLY THREE OF THEM TO REPORT BACK TO LIEUTENANT CONWAY ...



A GERMAN UNIT, THRUSTING MILES AHEAD OF THE MAIN GERMAN FORCES, HAD SWUNG BEHIND THEM TO CUT THEM OFF ...



THEY HAD LEFT THEIR WITHDRAWAL TOO LATE ...

IT'S AN  
AMBUSH !

GET OUT !  
GET OUT !



ALL WAS CONFUSION AND PANIC AS THE GERMANS  
LOBBED GRENADE AFTER GRENADE ON TO THE ROAD ...

GET UNDER  
COVER ! INTO  
THE DITCH !



MILLBANK AND TANNER SET UP THE BREN GUN IN THE DITCH. THEY WERE A GOOD TEAM AND CORPORAL HEDGES WAS RELIEVED TO SEE THAT THEY STAYED COOL UNDER FIRE . . .



THAT'S IT - THERE'S SOME OF THE PERISHERS THERE.

KEEP IT UP, YOU TWO - COME ON MOSS, WE'LL TRY TO GET ROUND THEIR FLANK.

BUT AS THE TWO MEN WORKED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE WOOD, THE OPPOSITION IN FRONT OF THEM SEEMED TO MELT AWAY.



THEY'VE GONE!

MOSS WAS A QUIET, UNASSUMING MAN. BUT IN THE COUNTRY HE SHOWED KNOWLEDGE AND SURENESS, SO THAT EVEN IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES HEDGES WAS READY TO FOLLOW HIM . . .



WE'RE NEAR THE EDGE OF THE WOOD, CORPORAL, AND I CAN HEAR SOMETHING OVER ON OUR LEFT.

LET'S GET OUT IN THE OPEN WHERE WE CAN SEE.

THEY BROKE COVER FAR TO THE RIGHT OF THE OTHER BRITISH FORCES. THEY WERE HIGHER THAN THEM, TOO, AND THEY HAD A GRANDSTAND VIEW OF THE TRAGEDY THAT FOLLOWED ...

LOOK, THAT'S  
LIEUTENANT CONWAY!  
THEY'VE FLUSHED THOSE GERMANS  
OUT OF THE WOOD AND NOW  
THEY'RE AFTER THEM!



AS THEY WATCHED, CONWAY GAVE HIS ORDER AND THEY SAW THE BAYONETS COME DOWN TO THE 'ON GUARD' POSITION. AND THEN MOSS POINTED IN HORROR ...

CHARGE!

YAAAA!

WHAHOO!

LOOK -  
BEHIND THE  
HEDGE!





CONWAY AND HIS MEN THOUGHT THEY WERE CHARGING THE HANDFUL OF GERMAN RIFLEMEN ON THE GROUND IN FRONT OF THEM, BUT IN FACT THEY WERE RUNNING STRAIGHT INTO A TRAP . . .



ONCE AGAIN THEY WERE TOO LATE. THE GERMAN SPANDAU HAMMERED INTO ACTION AND THE BRITISH SOLDIERS COLLAPSED LIKE BROKEN DOLLS . . .



IN SECONDS IT WAS ALL OVER. NOW THE GERMANS COULD TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE TWO ON THE HILL...

ALL OF THEM.  
EVERY ONE OF  
THEM GONE.

GET DOWN!  
THE JERRIES ARE  
FIRING AT  
US NOW!



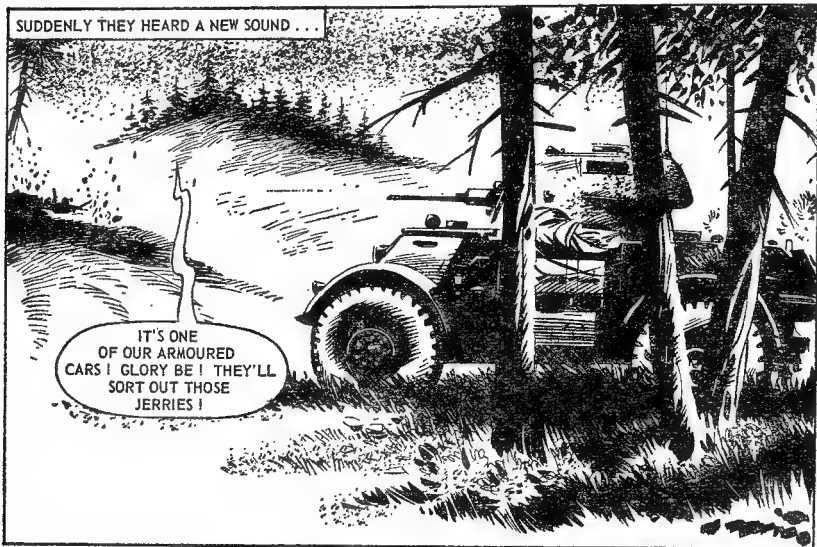
THE CURVE OF THE LAND GAVE THEM SOME PROTECTION, BUT THE GERMAN RIFLEMEN WERE JOINING IN NOW AND HEDGES KNEW THEY WOULD SOON BE HIT...

TRY TO  
WORK BACK  
TOWARDS THE WOOD.  
BUT KEEP DOWN  
FOR YOUR LIFE'S  
SAKE!



SUDDENLY THEY HEARD A NEW SOUND...

IT'S ONE  
OF OUR ARMoured  
CARS! GLORY BE! THEY'LL  
SORT OUT THOSE  
JERRIES!



IMPERVIOUS TO THE MACHINE GUN FIRE THE ARMoured CAR  
EDGED FORWARD FROM THE SHELTER OF THE WOOD.

HE'S GOING TO  
GET THAT MACHINE  
GUN - GO ON, BOYO, GIVE  
'EM WHAT FOR!

IT'S GOOD TO  
BE DISHING IT OUT  
FOR A CHANGE.

BUT THEIR JOY WAS SHORT-LIVED. ACROSS THE  
VALLEY, A FARMHOUSE STOOD IN A DOMINATING  
POSITION. FROM IT, A GUN BARKED BRIEFLY...

WHAT  
THE HECK WAS  
THAT?

SOUNDED  
LIKE AN ANTI-TANK  
GUN...

THE ARMoured CAR STARTED TO BACK TOWARDS THE WOOD, BUT THE NEXT  
TWO SHOTS FROM THE ANTI-TANK GUN CAUGHT IT FAIR AND SQUARE...

POOR DEVILS...

IT WAS STARTING TO GET DARK AS CORPORAL HEDGES AND MOSS THREADED THEIR WAY BACK THROUGH THE WOOD ...

SERGEANT GRIMSDALE DEAD,  
LIEUTENANT CONWAY  
DEAD ...

THE GERMANS  
ARE CUTTING US  
TO PIECES, AREN'T  
THEY, CORP ?

THEY FOUND LANCE CORPORAL WILLBANK AND PRIVATE TANNER AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO LIEUTENANT CONWAY ...

I THINK WE'RE THE ONLY ONES LEFT OUT OF OUR LOT, CORP. AND WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US ?

I DON'T KNOW.  
I DON'T THINK  
ANYBODY KNOWS.

A CAPTAIN CAME ALONG  
LATER, ASKING FOR  
SENIOR N.C.O.s AND  
OFFICERS ...

THEN YOU'D  
BETTER  
COME ALONG.

I THINK  
I'M THE SENIOR  
MAN IN OUR  
PLATOON NOW,  
SIR.

A STRANGELY MIXED GROUP OF OFFICERS AND N.C.O.s GATHERED AROUND THE CAPTAIN IN THE DARKNESS WHILE HE TRIED TO EXPLAIN THE POSITION TO THEM.

THE GERMANS ARE STRIKING RIGHT ACROSS FRANCE, CUTTING THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE OFF FROM THE FRENCH ARMY. OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO MAKE FOR CALAIS OR DUNKIRK. BUT OUR UNIT IS IN A PARTICULARLY BAD POSITION ...



FATIGUE WAS DULLING THE CAPTAIN'S VOICE, AND HIS EYES WERE DARK WITH WORRY AND LACK OF SLEEP ...



SOME GERMANS HAVE CUT ROUND BEHIND US AS YOU KNOW. WE SHALL HAVE TO BREAK OUT TOMORROW OR WE SHALL STAND LITTLE CHANCE OF ESCAPING AT ALL.

HEDGES MADE HIS WAY BACK TO HIS MEN, GRIMLY THOUGHTFUL. HE KEPT THINKING OF TODAY'S ATTEMPT AT A BREAK-OUT AND HE WONDERED WHAT FURTHER DISASTERS THERE WOULD BE TOMORROW ...



WHERE'S MOSS?

THERE'S BEEN NO PROPER RATIONS ISSUED, SO HE'S GONE OFF TO TRY TO FIND SOME FOOD - THOUGH WHERE HE EXPECTS TO FIND SOME IN A WOOD, I DON'T KNOW.

BUT WHEN MOSS CAME BACK THE AIR OF GLOOM WAS SUDDENLY LIFTED . . .



THEY IMPROVISED A STOVE, AND THE BUSINESS OF COOKING THE MEAL TOOK THEIR MINDS OFF THEIR PREDICAMENT . . .



THEY FISHED THE PHEASANT OUT OF THE WATER AND CUT IT INTO FOUR, STILL CHATTERING ABOUT THE REVELATION OF MOSS'S PEACE-TIME OCCUPATION . . .





BUT CORPORAL HEDGES' MIND WAS WORKING...

SLOWLY HE EVOLVED AN IDEA - WHICH HE EXPLAINED TO THE OTHERS...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

THOSE GERMANS ARE BEATING US BECAUSE THEY'RE SKILLED SOLDIERS. BUT WHAT IF WE MAKE USE OF OUR CIVILIAN SKILLS...?

I'M GAME, CORP!

STAND A BETTER CHANCE THAN WE WOULD TOMORROW.

SO HEDGES WENT TO THE CAPTAIN, WHO WAS GLAD TO CLUTCH AT ANY STRAW...

WE SHALL ATTACK AT DAWN IN ANY CASE. IF YOU GET THERE, FIRE A VEREY LIGHT. GOOD LUCK, CORPORAL!

THANK YOU, SIR.

NOT THAT THE CAPTAIN THOUGHT THERE WAS MUCH HOPE FOR CORPORAL HEDGES. BUT, WITH ALL HIS SENIOR OFFICERS AND MOST OF HIS MEN KILLED, HE COULD NOT SEE MUCH HOPE FOR ANY OF THEM . . .



HEDGES AND HIS TINY BAND HELD A COUNCIL OF WAR . . .



## Chapter 3.

## THE SOLDIERS

THEY SET OFF IN THE VERY EARLY MORNING. IT WAS DARK AND COLD, AND A LOT OF THEIR COURAGE HAD DRAINED AWAY ...

FOUR OF US —  
UP AGAINST HEAVEN  
KNOWS HOW  
MANY JERRIES ...



MOSS TOOK OVER THE LEAD AND BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE WOOD ON THE FLANK OF THE GERMAN POSITION ...

SOME WILL  
BE IN THE  
FARMHOUSE ITSELF  
AND SOME WILL BE  
OUTSIDE IN  
OTHER DEFENSIVE  
POSITIONS.



HE HAD HARDLY SPOKEN WHEN A BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE SHATTERED THE NIGHT. IT WAS FIRING TOWARDS THE WOOD - BUT NOT AT THEM!



THEY HAD HARDLY SPOKEN WHEN A BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE SHATTERED THE NIGHT. IT WAS FIRING TOWARDS THE WOOD - BUT NOT AT THEM!



AFTER A WHILE, HEDGES DROPPED OFF MILLBANK AND TANNER...



MOSS AND HEDGES CRAWLED ON – AND HEDGES REALISED AFTER A WHILE THAT THEY WERE GOING TOWARDS THE FARMHOUSE NOW. THEN THEY STOPPED AGAIN AND MOSS POINTED . . .



MOSS DREW HIS BAYONET AND WENT ON BY HIMSELF. IN THE DARKNESS, HEDGES AIMED A RIFLE – BUT HE COULD ONLY USE IT AS A LAST RESORT . . .



A FEW MINUTES LATER, MOSS ROSE OUT OF THE GROUND BEHIND THE GERMANS. ONE WAS SLEEPING, BUT THE OTHER NEVER SENSED A THING.



THERE WAS A TOUGH STREAK IN THE COUNTRY MAN. BOTH GERMANS DIED, ONE WITHOUT EVEN WAKING UP. MOSS BECKONED TO CORPORAL HEDGES . . .



THE DEAD GERMANS WERE HEAVY AND DIFFICULT TO MOVE WITHOUT MAKING A NOISE. BY THE TIME HEDGES HAD GOT THEM OUT OF THE PIT THE OTHERS HAD JOINED HIM . . .



ONCE AGAIN, HEDGES AND MOSS LEFT THE OTHERS AND STARTED TO CRAWL TOWARDS THE FARMHOUSE ITSELF ...



THEY CRAWLED CLOSER. THERE WAS A MILKING SHED STANDING A LITTLE APART FROM THE OTHER BUILDINGS. THE GERMANS HAD MADE THIS A SENTRY POST AND WHILE THEY WATCHED THE SENTRIES WERE CHANGED ...



MOSS INCHED HIS WAY CLOSER, SLIPPING SILENTLY FROM ONE PIECE OF COVER TO ANOTHER. THERE WAS A HERD OF COWS IN A NEARBY YARD AND THE NOISES THEY MADE HELPED ...



HEDGES HAD WORKED HIS WAY ROUND TO THE BACK OF THE MILKING SHED. HE SLIPPED INSIDE AND STEALTHILY TOOK UP A POSITION IN ONE OF THE STALLS ...



IN THE GUN PIT, MILLBANK AND TANNER HAD BEEN SILENTLY EXAMINING THE HEAVY SPANDAUF MACHINE GUN. IN CIVILIAN LIFE, ONE HAD BEEN A MOTOR MECHANIC AND THE OTHER AN ENGINEER. THEIR TRAINING, TOO, WAS COMING IN USEFUL ...





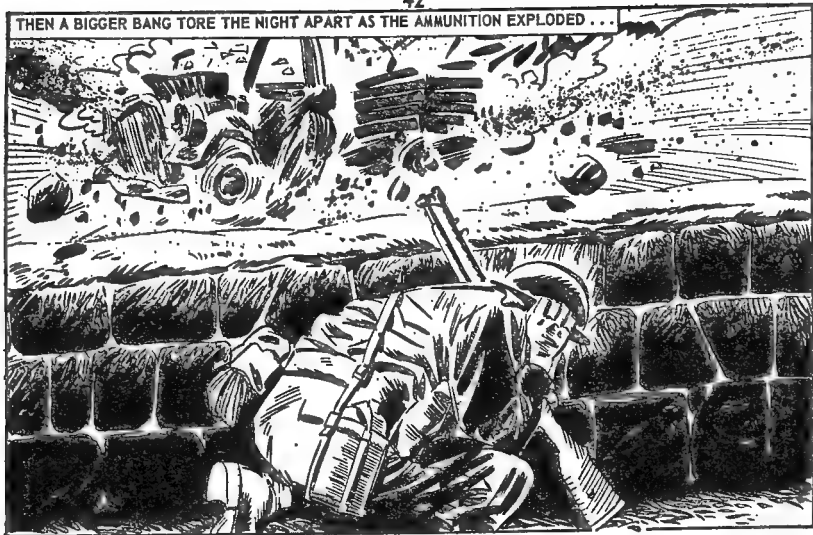
MOST OF THE GERMAN TRANSPORT WAS PARKED IN THE CENTRAL YARD, BUT ONE TRUCK STOOD AWAY FROM THE REST, TUCKED INTO COVER. MOSS CRAWLED INTO A CONVENIENT PIG-STY AND DREW THE PIN FROM A GRENADE . . .



THE GRENADE WENT OFF WITH A SHARP CRACK. IN THE SAME SECOND, HEDGES SHOT THE GERMAN SENTRY . . .



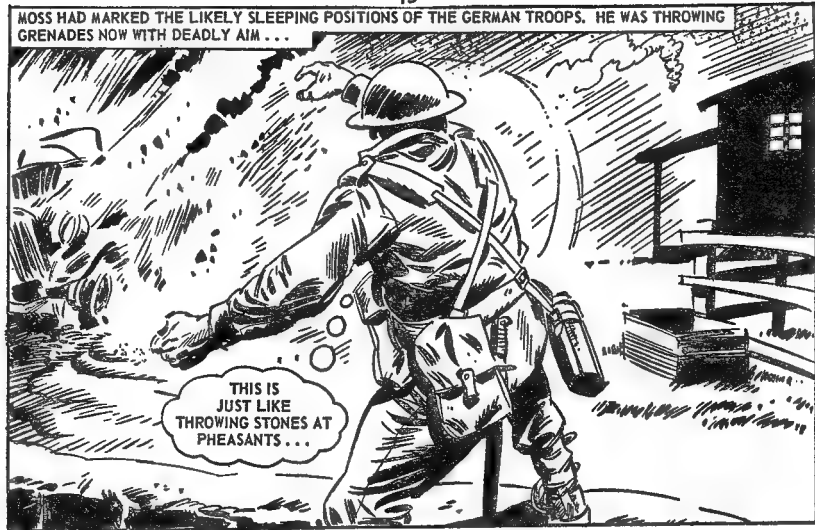
THEN A BIGGER BANG TORE THE NIGHT APART AS THE AMMUNITION EXPLODED . . .



THERE WAS HARDLY NEED FOR THE SIGNAL CARTRIDGE BUT HEDGES FIRED IT ALL THE SAME.



MOSS HAD MARKED THE LIKELY SLEEPING POSITIONS OF THE GERMAN TROOPS. HE WAS THROWING GRENADES NOW WITH DEADLY AIM ...



MOST OF THE GERMAN TROOPS WERE SLEEPING IN A BARN. ONE GRENADE PITCHED INTO THE DOORWAY AS THEY CAME RUNNING OUT ...



BURNING AMMUNITION WAS EXPLODING EVERYWHERE. COVERED BY THE NOISE, CORPORAL HEDGES AND PRIVATE MOSS USED THEIR RIFLES TO SHOOT DOWN MORE OF THE DISORGANISED GERMAN GARRISON . . .



DAWN WAS STARTING TO BREAK NOW. WITH THAT AND THE LIGHT FROM THE BLAZING AMMUNITION TRUCK, MILLBANK WAS ABLE TO PICK OUT ENEMY SOLDIERS AND USE THE DEADLY ACCURACY OF THE BREN . . .



WHILE, BEHIND MILLBANK, PRIVATE TANNER WAS HAMMERING AWAY WITH THE SPANDAU, WIPING OUT THE OUTER RING OF THE GERMAN DEFENCES THAT HIS GUN HAD BEEN INTENDED TO REINFORCE . . .



SO THAT THE BRITISH TROOPS RUNNING ACROSS THE OPEN GROUND FOUND HUGE BREAKS IN THE RING OF DEFENCES . . .



IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE THE GERMANS DISCOVERED THAT THERE WERE ENEMIES ACTUALLY IN THEIR MIDST.



THERE WERE FEW OF THE GERMANS LEFT NOW AND MOST OF THOSE WERE IN OUTLYING POSITIONS. BUT THE HANDFUL STILL ALIVE IN THE FARM BUILDINGS SWIFTLY CLOSED IN ON PRIVATE MOSS . . .



THE GERMAN FELDWEBEL STEPPED FORWARD TO HURL THE GRENADE AT THE UNSUSPECTING MOSS — AND HEDGES PROMPTLY SHOT HIM . . .



MOSS DIVED FLAT AS THE GRENADE EXPLODED ALMOST AT THE FEET OF THE SHOT GERMAN.



THE CORPORAL AND MOSS JOINED FORCES. BUT THE GERMANS WERE MOVING IN, AND SCHMEISSER BULLETS RAKED THE GROUND AND THUDDING INTO THE WALL.







IT WAS INDEED A VICTORY . . .

THERE ARE  
TWO MORE JERRY  
GUNS ROUND THE  
CORNER, SIR -  
THAT MAKES FOUR  
ALTOGETHER.

GOOD - YOU MEN DID  
VERY WELL. YOU'VE SHOWN  
US THAT WE CAN BEAT  
THE GERMANS - GIVEN  
HALF A CHANCE !

MILLBANK AND TANNER EXAMINED ONE OF THE CAPTURED GUNS . . .

THERE'S  
BOUND TO  
BE A COUNTER-  
ATTACK.

THE GUNS'LL  
COME IN HANDY  
IF THERE IS.  
JUST AS WELL  
MOSSY DIDN'T BLOW  
ALL THE AMMO.

THE GERMANS REACTED VERY FAST INDEED . . .

SIR !  
SIR !

STUKA  
DIVE-BOMBERS !  
SPREAD OUT !  
TAKE COVER !

MOST OF THE MEN WENT TO GROUND IMMEDIATELY, BUT LANCE-CORPORAL MILLBANK AND PRIVATE TANNER HAD GOT THE BIT BETWEEN THEIR TEETH NOW - AND THEY WERE DETERMINED TO HIT BACK.



SO TOO WERE HEDGES AND MOSS, WHO RACED TO THE TRENCH WHERE MILLBANK AND TANNER HAD LEFT THE BREN AND THE SPANDAU...



MILLBANK AND TANNER SOON HAD THEIR GUN FIRING, BUT NOT SURPRISINGLY THEIR INITIAL AIM WAS POOR...



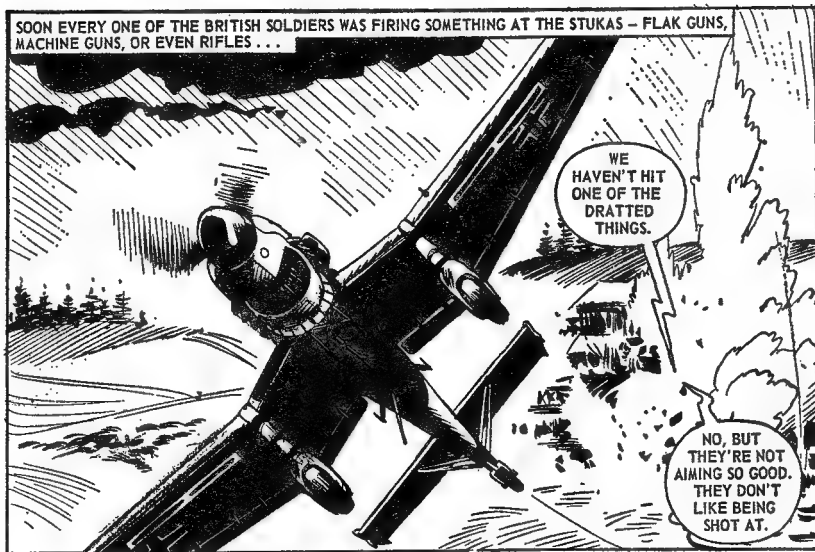
THEIR EXAMPLE, HOWEVER, INSPIRED OTHERS . . .



THEN HEDGES AND MOSS OPENED UP . . .



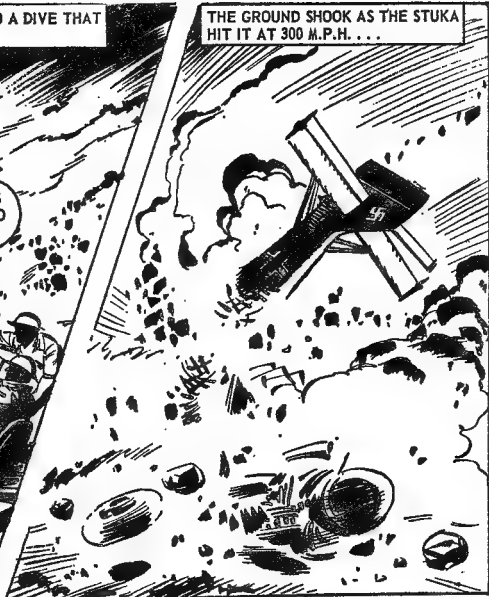
SOON EVERY ONE OF THE BRITISH SOLDIERS WAS FIRING SOMETHING AT THE STUKAS – FLAK GUNS, MACHINE GUNS, OR EVEN RIFLES . . .



AND THEN ONE OF THE STUKAS WENT INTO A DIVE THAT SEEMED UNCONTROLLED . . .



THE GROUND SHOOK AS THE STUKA HIT IT AT 300 M.P.H. . .



SHORTLY AFTER, THE REST OF THE PLANES FLEW AWAY . . .



IN THE LATE AFTERNOON, A PANZER MARK III NOSED OUT OF THE WOODS NEARBY...

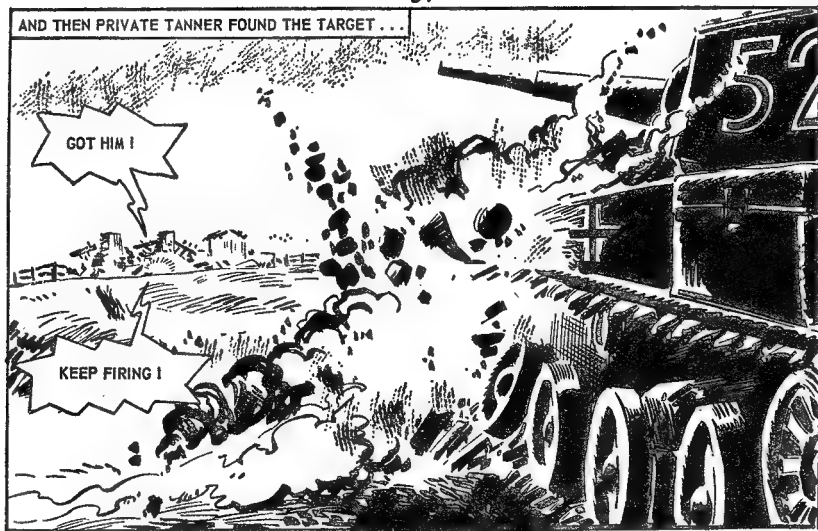


THEY'RE IN A HURRY TO GET ON OR THEY WOULDN'T RISK EVEN THAT ONE TANK. WE'LL WAIT AS LONG AS WE DARE.

AT LAST THE CAPTAIN GAVE THE ORDER...



AND THEN PRIVATE TANNER FOUND THE TARGET . . .



SHELL AFTER SHELL POUNDED INTO THE TANK. NONE OF THE CREW EMERGED.



THEY SAW NO MORE TANKS OR GERMANS, BUT NOW SHELL AFTER SHELL  
CAME FROM THE WOOD AND BURST AMONG THE FARM BUILDINGS . . .



IT WAS EVENING NOW AND THEY WERE ABLE TO GET CLEAR UNDER  
COVER OF DARKNESS . . .



THERE WAS SOMETHING HEDGES WANTED TO GET STRAIGHT FIRST . . .

WE'VE LOST THEN, SIR, HAVEN'T WE ?

YES, CORPORAL, WE'VE LOST THIS BATTLE. BUT NOT THE WAR. WE'VE LEARNT A LOT - AND WE'LL BE BACK.

A LITTLE EARLIER, AN ORDER TO SEPARATE AND RUN FOR IT MIGHT HAVE DEMORALISED THEM. BUT THEY WERE TOUGHER NOW . . .



THEY FOUND A FRENCH CAR THAT HAD BEEN ABANDONED BY SOME REFUGEES, HAVING BROKEN DOWN. BUT TANNER'S MECHANICAL "KNOW-HOW" BROUGHT IT TO LIFE.

THAT'S IT ! GOING LIKE A BIRD !





SO THEY DROVE TO CALAIS . . .



THEY FOUND PLACES ON THE DECK . . .



AND THAT NIGHT THEY SAILED . . .



YOU KNOW  
SOMETHING, CORP -  
WE'VE CHANGED,  
ALL OF US.

WE CERTAINLY HAVE I  
WE WERE JUST CIVILIANS  
IN UNIFORM BEFORE, BUT I  
RECKON WE'VE BECOME  
SOLDIERS NOW.

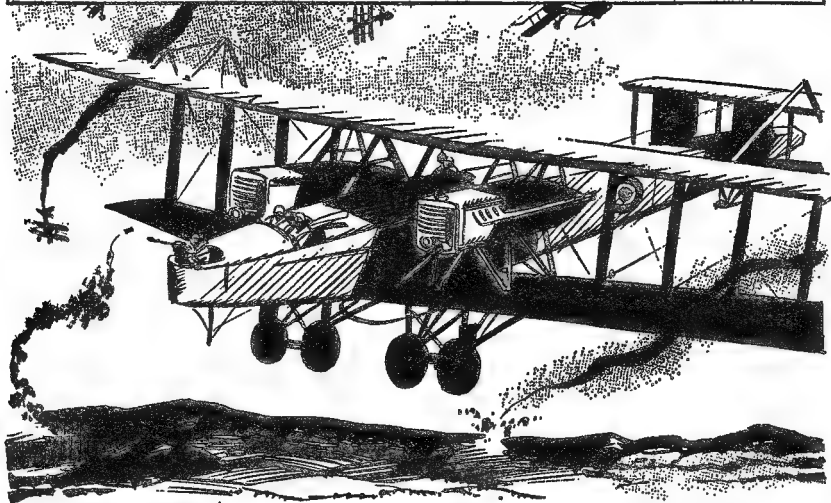
THEY HAD BEEN DEFEATED,  
BUT THEY HAD LEARNT  
FROM THAT DEFEAT. LIKE  
THE CAPTAIN HAD SAID -  
THEY WOULD BE BACK . . .



AND WHEN WE  
DO COME BACK WE'LL  
MAKE DARNED SURE  
WE DON'T LOSE  
THAT BATTLE.

# DARBY and JOAN

FLYING OFFICER HENRY DARBY HAD FIRST FLOWN IN THE DAYS OF THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS AS A PILOT OF ONE OF THE LUMBERING HANDLEY PAGE 0/100 . . .



BUT HIS OPERATIONAL FLYING DAYS HAD LONG SINCE PASSED, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS STILL ON AN OPERATIONAL SQUADRON.

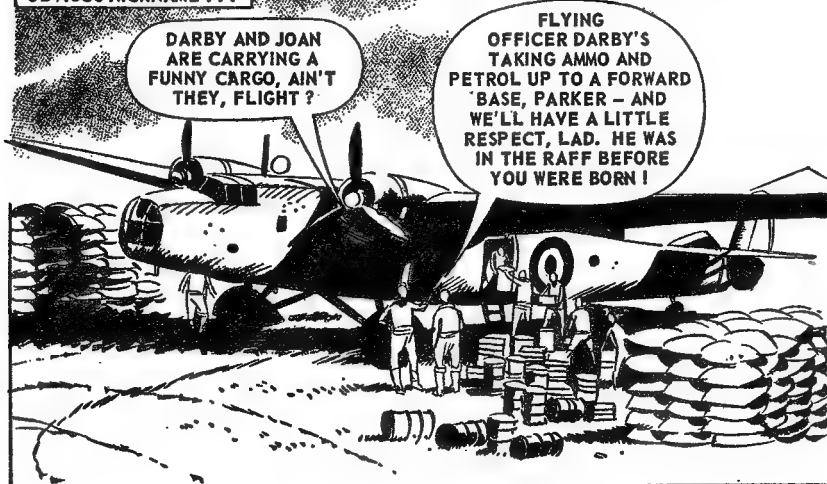
HEY, HENRY –  
THE MESS'S SUPPLY  
OF BEER MUST BE  
RUNNING LOW. THE C.O.  
SAYS HE'S GOT A  
JOB FOR YOU.

ANOTHER SPUD  
RUN BACK TO THE  
SUPPLY DEPOTS  
IN CAIRO, I  
SUPPOSE.

BUT WHEN THE VETERAN FLIER REPORTED TO THE STATION COMMANDER . . .



THE DESERT SQUADRON BOASTED ANOTHER HANDLEY PAGE - A HARROW - NOT QUITE SO ANCIENT AS THE O/100. IT WAS HENRY DARBY'S OWN AND HAD BEEN GIVEN AN OBVIOUS NICKNAME . . .



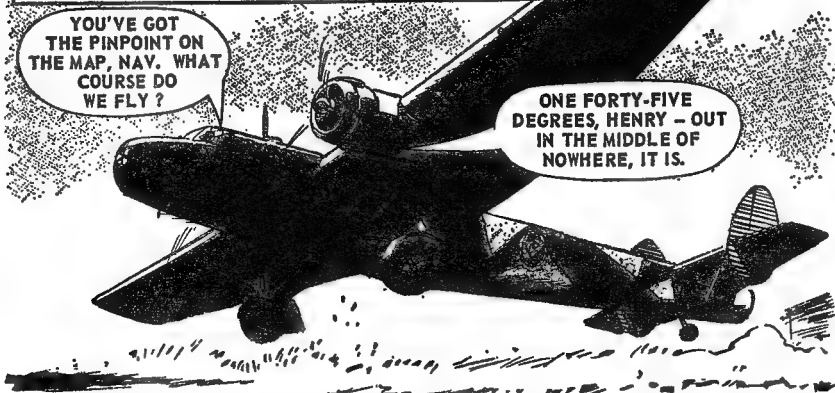
THE BLOOD BEAT A LITTLE FASTER IN HENRY'S VEINS AS HE NURSED THE ELDERLY PEGASUS ENGINES UP TO FULL REVS ...



WE'VE GOT  
A 'CLEAR' FROM  
CONTROL,  
HENRY.

THEY'LL HAVE  
TO WAIT A MINUTE,  
THAT PORT MOTOR  
IS PLAYING UP,  
AS USUAL ...

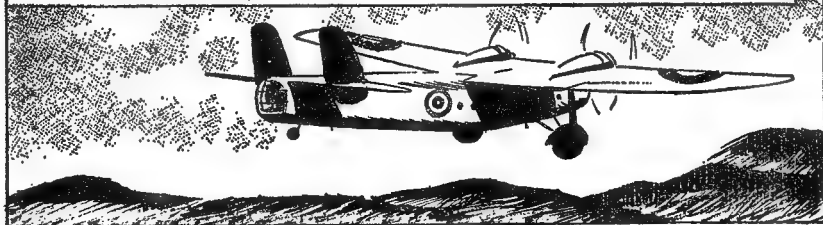
AT LAST THEY WERE RATHER LABORIOUSLY AIRBORNE ...



YOU'VE GOT  
THE PINPOINT ON  
THE MAP, NAV. WHAT  
COURSE DO  
WE FLY ?

ONE FORTY-FIVE  
DEGREES, HENRY - OUT  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
NOWHERE, IT IS.

THE EMPTY DESERT TO THE SOUTH OF THE EMBATTLED FORCES OF BRITAIN AND GERMANY WAS DESOLATE, ALMOST IMPASSIBLE COUNTRY. BUT AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO OUTFLANK THE ENEMY, SO ADVANCE SUPPLY BASES WERE BEING SET UP ...



THEY LUMBERED ALONG FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS...

WHAT'S OUR ETA, NAV?

ANOTHER FIFTEEN MINUTES, HENRY. IT'S JUST ANOTHER SPUD RUN, AFTER ALL, ISN'T IT?

A SMALL DETACHMENT OF THE LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP WAS TO BE WAITING AT THEIR DESTINATION TO TAKE DELIVERY OF THE SUPPLIES. SOON...

VEHICLES UP AHEAD, HENRY. A TIDY FEW OF THEM, TOO...

THAT'S ODD!

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A HUNDRED VEHICLES IN THE LEAGUER BELOW THE OLD HARROW...

THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN THREE LRDG TRUCKS - I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

HEY, SKIPPER - THEY'RE FIRING AT US!

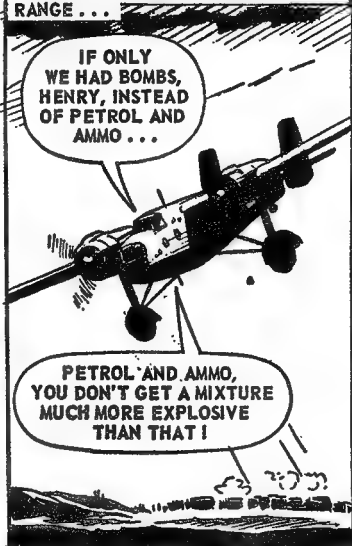
THE TRUCKS BELOW BRISTLED WITH FIRE AND BULLETS PUNCHED HOLES IN THE WINGS AND FUSELAGE ...



HEY,  
THEY'RE  
JERRIES!

HUNS!  
WHAT'RE  
THEY DOING  
HERE?

THE ANCIENT HARROW TURNED PONDEROUSLY OUT OF THE ENEMY'S RANGE ...



IF ONLY  
WE HAD BOMBS,  
HENRY, INSTEAD  
OF PETROL AND  
AMMO ...

PETROL AND AMMO,  
YOU DON'T GET A MIXTURE  
MUCH MORE EXPLOSIVE  
THAN THAT!

THERE WAS NO TIME FOR "JOAN" TO GAIN HEIGHT OUT OF RANGE OF THE SMALL ARMS FIRE ...



LET'S HOPE  
THE OLD GIRL'S  
BOMB DOORS STILL  
WORK. STAND  
BY, NAV ...

THIS TIME THE ENEMY WERE REALLY READY FOR THEM. THEY FLEW STRAIGHT INTO A VERITABLE BLIZZARD OF BULLETS . . .

SHUDDERING WITH EVERY HIT, THE HARROW RUMBLLED OVER THE MASS OF VEHICLES. THE "BOMBS" TUMBLED DOWN . . .

BOMB  
DOORS  
OPEN !

ACHTUNG !  
ACHTUNG !

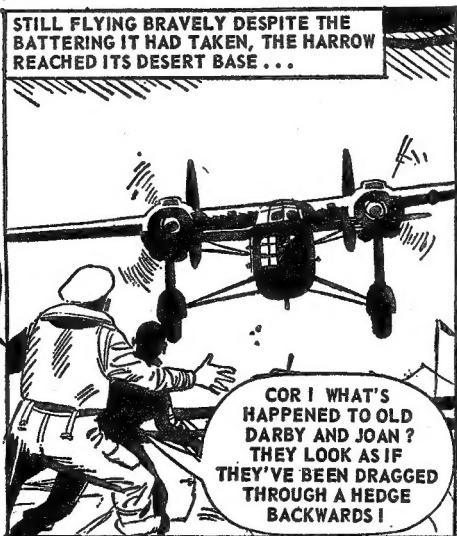






HENRY TOOK A FRESH GRIP OF THE  
CONTROL COLUMN AND SWUNG THE  
TATTERED OLD BOMBER HOMEWARD.

STILL FLYING BRAVELY DESPITE THE  
BATTERING IT HAD TAKEN, THE HARROW  
REACHED ITS DESERT BASE . . .



THE STATION COMMANDER WAS WAITING FOR FLYING OFFICER HENRY DARBY ...



HENRY - I  
GIVE YOU THE CHANCE  
TO TACKLE SOMETHING  
OPERATIONAL FOR A  
CHANGE - AND WHAT  
DO YOU DO ... ?



YOU LOSE TWO TONS OF  
FUEL AND AMMO - AND GET YOUR  
AIRCRAFT PUNCTURED WITH MORE  
HOLES THAN A COLANDER. I SHOULDN'T  
BE SURPRISED IF YOU DON'T GET  
A D.S.O. FOR IT, YOU OLD  
WAR-HORSE I WELL DONE !

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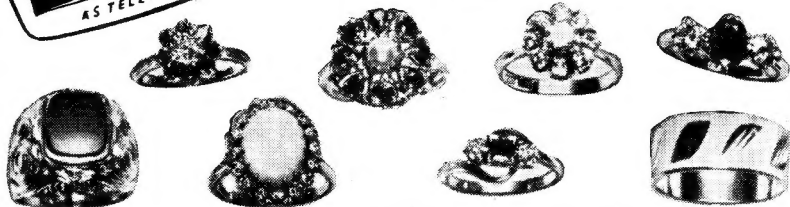
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